

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed January 26, 2004 has been reviewed and carefully considered. The Examiner's reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1-13 are pending in the present application. Claims 14 and 15 have been cancelled. Claims 1, 4 and 9 have been amended. No new matter has been introduced.

The Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claims 2, 14 and 15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By the Office Action, Claim 4 was objected to due to typographical error. Applicant has replaced "said opposing pairs" in line 2 with "opposing pairs" as suggested by the Examiner. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-5, 7, 9-10 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,429,543 to Tilbor et al. (hereinafter Tilbor '543). Claims 6 and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tilbor in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,919,075 to George et al. (hereinafter George). Claims 8 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tilbor in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,024,627 to Tilbor et al. (hereinafter Tilbor '627).

As noted above, Claims 14 and 15 were deemed allowable by the Examiner. The limitations of Claims 14 and 15 were incorporated in their entirety into Claims 1 and 9, respectively, and Claims 14 and 15 were cancelled. Accordingly, since Claims 1 and 9 include all of the previous limitations of Claims 14 and 15, Claims 1 and 9 are patentably

distinct and non-obvious over the cited references for at least the same reasons given above for Claims 14 and 15, respectively.

Claims 3-5 and 7 depend either directly or indirectly from Claim 1 and thus include all of the limitations of Claim 1. Accordingly, Claims 3-5 and 7 are patentably distinct and non-obvious over the cited references for at least the same reasons as Claim 1.

Claims 10 and 12 depend either directly or indirectly from Claim 9 and thus include all of the limitations of Claim 9. Accordingly, Claims 10 and 12 are patentably distinct and non-obvious over the cited references for at least the same reasons as Claim 9.

With respect to dependent Claims 6, 8, 11, and 13, Applicants respectfully submit that George and Tilbor '627 do not cure the deficiencies of Tilbor '543. For example, since Claims 6, 8, 11, and 13 depend either directly or indirectly from one of Claims 1 and 9, the latter grouping having been amended to now include all of the limitations of allowable Claims 14 and 15, respectively, neither George, Tilbor '627, or Tilbor '543, either taken singly or in any combination, disclose or suggest all of the limitations presently recited in dependent Claims 6, 8, 11, and 13.

Thus, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and 35 U.S.C. §103(a), and early allowance of pending claims 1-13 on the merits.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted

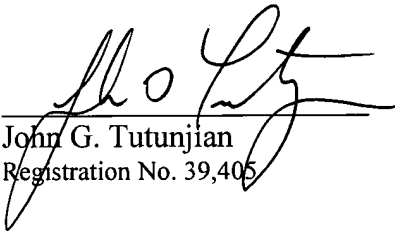
that claims 1-13 are patentable and nonobvious over the cited references. Consequently, the Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections and allowance of the application. Such early and favorable action is earnestly solicited.

It is believed that no additional fees or charges are currently due. However, in the event that any additional fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the application, they may be charged to applicant's representatives Deposit Account No. 50-1433.

Respectfully submitted,

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